



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

Section II.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)

ments which have been made use of by the late famous and learned Dr. Grabe, in the second volume of his *Spicilegium*.

SECTION II.

- I. *What facts in the history of our Saviour might be taken notice of by Pagan Authors.*
- II. *What particular facts are taken notice of, and by what Pagan Authors.*
- III. *How Celsus represented our Saviour's miracles.*
- IV. *The same representation made of them by other unbelievers, and proved unreasonable.*
- V. *What facts in our Saviour's history not to be expected from Pagan writers.*

I. **W**E now come to consider what undoubted authorities are extant among *Pagan* writers; and here we must premise, that some parts of our Saviour's history may be reasonably expected from *Pagans*. I mean such parts as might be known to those who lived at a distance from *Judaea*, as well as to those who were the followers and eye-witnesses of *Christ*.

II. Such particulars are most of these which follow, and which are all attested by some one or other of those heathen Authors, who lived in or near the age of our Saviour and his disciples. *That Augustus-Cæsar had ordered the whole empire to be censured or taxed, which brought our Saviour's reputed parents to Bethlehem:* This is mentioned by several *Roman* historians, as *Tacitus*, *Suetonius*, and *Dion*. *That a great light, or a new star appeared in the east, which directed the wise men to our Saviour:* This is recorded by *Chalcedius*. *That Herod, the King of Palestine, so often mentioned in the Roman history, made a great slaughter of innocent children, being so jealous of his successor, that he put to death his own sons on that account:* This character of him is given by several historians, and this cruel fact mentioned by *Macrobius*, a heathen Author, who tells it as a known thing, without any mark or doubt upon it. *That our Saviour had been in Egypt:* This *Celsus*, though he raises a monstrous story upon it, is so far from denying, that he tells us our
Saviour

Saviour learned the arts of magic in that country. *That Pontius Pilate was Governor of Judæa, that our Saviour was brought in judgment before him, and by him condemned and crucified:* This is recorded by *Tacitus*. *That many miraculous cures and works out of the ordinary course of nature were wrought by him:* This is confessed by *Julian* the Apostate, *Porphyry*, and *Hierocles*, all of them not only Pagans, but professed enemies and persecutors of Christianity. *That our Saviour foretold several things which came to pass according to his predictions:* This was attested by *Phlegon* in his annals, as we are assured by the learned *Origen* against *Celsus*. *That at the time when our Saviour died, there was a miraculous darkness and a great earthquake:* This is recorded by the same *Phlegon* the Trallian, who was likewise a Pagan and Freeman to *Adrian* the Emperor. We may here observe, that a native of *Trallium*, which was not situate at so great a distance from *Palestine*, might very probably be informed of such remarkable events as had passed among the Jews in the age immediately preceding his own times, since several of his countrymen with whom he had conversed, might have received a confused report of our Saviour before his crucifixion, and probably lived within the Shake of the earthquake, and the Shadow of the eclipse, which are recorded by this Author. *That Christ was worshipped as a God among the Christians; that they would rather suffer death than blaspheme him; that they received a sacrament, and by it entered into a vow of abstaining from sin and wickedness, conformable to the advice given by St. Paul; that they had private assemblies of worship, and used to join together in Hymns:* This is the account which *Pliny* the younger gives of Christianity in his days, about seventy years after the death of *Christ*, and which agrees in all its circumstances with the accounts we have in holy writ, of the first state of Christianity after the crucifixion of our Blessed Saviour. *That St. Peter, whose miracles are many of them recorded in holy writ, did many wonderful works,* is owned by *Julian* the apostate, who therefore represents him as a great Magician, and one who had in his possession a book of magical secrets left him by our Saviour. *That the devils or evil spirits were subject to them,* we may learn from *Porphyry*, who objects to Christianity, that since *Jesus* had begun to be worshipped, *Æsculapius* and the rest of the gods did no more converse with men. Nay, *Celsus* himself affirms the same thing in effect, when he says, that the power which seemed to reside in Christians, proceeded from the use of certain names, and the invocation of certain dæmons. *Origen* remarks on this passage, that the Author doubtless hints at those Christians who put to flight

flight evil spirits, and healed those who were possessed with them; a fact which had been often seen, and which he himself had seen, as he declares in another part of his discourse against *Celsus*. But at the same time he assures us, that this miraculous power was exerted by the use of no other name but that of *Jesus*, to which were added several passages in his history, but nothing like any invocation to *Demons*.

III. *Celsus* was so hard set with the report of our Saviour's miracles, and the confident attestations concerning him, that though he often intimates he did not believe them to be true, yet knowing he might be silenced in such an answer, provides himself with another retreat, when beaten out of this; namely, that our Saviour was a magician. Thus he compares the feeding of so many thousands at two different times with a few loaves and fishes, to the magical feasts of those *Egyptian* impostors, who would present their spectators with visionary entertainments that had in them neither substance nor reality: which, by the way, is to suppose, that a hungry and fainting multitude were filled by an apparition, or strengthened and refreshed with shadows. He knew very well that there were so many witnesses and actors, if I may call them such, in these two miracles, that it was impossible to refute such multitudes, who had doubtless sufficiently spread the fame of them, and was therefore in this place forced to resort to the other solution, that it was done by magic. It was not enough to say that a miracle which appeared to so many thousand eye-witnesses was a forgery of *Christ's* disciples, and therefore supposing them to be eye-witnesses, he endeavours to shew how they might be deceived.

IV. The unconverted heathens, who were pressed by the many authorities that confirmed our Saviour's miracles, as well as the unbelieving *Jews*, who had actually seen them, were driven to account for them after the same manner: For, to work by magic in the heathen way of speaking, was in the language of the *Jews* to cast out devils by *Beelzebub* the Prince of the devils. Our Saviour, who knew that unbelievers in all ages would put this perverse interpretation on his miracles, has branded the malignity of those men, who contrary to the dictates of their own hearts started such an unreasonable objection, as a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and declared not only the guilt, but the punishment of so black a crime. At the same time he condescended to shew the vanity and emptiness of this objection against his miracles, by representing that they evidently tended to the destruction of those powers, to whose assistance the enemies of his doctrine then ascribed them. An argument, which, if duly weighed, renders the objection so very frivolous and groundless, that

we

we may venture to call it even blasphemy against common sense. Would Magic endeavour to draw off the minds of men from the worship which was paid to stocks and stones, to give them an abhorrence of those evil spirits who rejoiced in the most cruel sacrifices, and in offerings of the greatest impurity; and in short to call upon mankind to exert their whole strength in the love and adoration of that one Being, from whom they derived their existence, and on whom only they were taught to depend every moment for the happiness and continuance of it? Was it the business of magic to humanize our natures with compassion, forgiveness, and all the instances of the most extensive charity? Would evil spirits contribute to make men sober, chaste, and temperate, and in a word to produce that reformation, which was wrought in the moral world by those doctrines of our Saviour, that received their sanction from his miracles? Nor is it possible to imagine, that evil spirits would enter into a combination with our Saviour to cut off all their correspondence and intercourse with mankind, and to prevent any for the future from addicting themselves to those rites and ceremonies, which had done them so much honour. We see the early effect which Christianity had on the minds of men in this particular, by that number of books, which were filled with the secrets of magic, and made a sacrifice to Christianity by the converts mentioned in the *Acts* of the Apostles. We have likewise an eminent instance of the inconsistency of our Religion with magic, in the history of the famous *Aquila*. This person, who was a kinsman of the Emperor *Trajan*, and likewise a man of great learning, notwithstanding he had embraced Christianity, could not be brought off from the studies of magic, by the repeated admonitions of his fellow-christians: so that at length they expelled him their society, as rather chusing to lose the reputation of so considerable a Profelyte, than communicate with one who dealt in such dark and infernal practices. Besides we may observe, that all the favourers of magic were the most profest and bitter enemies to the christian religion. Not to mention *Simon Magus* and many others, I shall only take notice of those two great persecutors of christianity, the Emperors *Adrian* and *Julian* the Apostate, both of them initiated in the mysteries of divination, and skilled in all the depths of magic. I shall only add, that evil spirits cannot be supposed to have concurred in the establishment of a religion, which triumphed over them, drove them out of the places they possesed, and divested them of their influence on mankind; nor would I mention this particular, though it be unanimously reported by all the ancient christian Authors: did it not appear from the
authorities

the authorities above-cited, that this was a fact confessed by heathens themselves.

V. We now see what a multitude of *Pagan* testimonies may be produced for all those remarkable passages, which might have been expected from them: and indeed of several, that, I believe, do more than answer your expectation, as they were not subjects in their own nature so exposed to publick notoriety. It cannot be expected they should mention particulars, which were transacted amongst the Disciples only, or among some few even of the Disciples themselves; such as the transfiguration, the agony in the garden, the appearance of *Christ* after his resurrection, and others of the like nature. It was impossible for a heathen Author to relate these things; because if he had believed them, he would no longer have been a heathen, and by that means his testimony would not have been thought of so much validity. Besides, his very report of facts so favourable to Christianity would have prompted men to say that he was probably tainted with their doctrine. We have a parallel case in *Hecataeus*, a famous *Greek* Historian, who had several passages in his book conformable to the history of the *Jewish* writers, which when quoted by *Josephus*, as a confirmation of the *Jewish* history, when his heathen adversaries could give no other answer to it, they would need suppose that *Hecataeus* was a *Jew* in his heart, though they had no other reason for it, but because his history gave greater authority to the *Jewish* than the *Egyptian* Records.

S E C T I O N III.

- I. *Introduction to a second list of Pagan Authors, who give testimony of our Saviour.*
- II. *A passage concerning our Saviour, from a learned Athenian.*
- III. *His conversion from Paganism to Christianity makes his evidence stronger than if he had continued a Pagan.*
- IV. *Of another Athenian Philosopher converted to Christianity.*
- V. *Why their conversion, instead of weakening, strengthens their evidence in defence of Christianity.*
- VI. *Their belief in our Saviour's history founded at first upon the principles of historical faith.*

VOL. IV.

Cccc

VII. That